



CALIFORNIA MENTOR INITIATIVE

"We must do more to recruit and train mentors so that every child who wants a Big Brother or some other role model in his or her life can actually have one."

*Governor Pete Wilson
California Focus on
Fathers Summit,
June 13, 1995*

Background

Today, California faces a crisis of absent fathers and teenage pregnancy which is having devastating effects on our children. Structural change in our society, including the breakdown of the traditional family and erosion of neighborhood community support networks, have taken a toll on our youth. While youth struggle with many challenges, four problem areas stand out: alcohol/drug use, teen pregnancy, educational failure, and gangs and violence. Governor Wilson created the California Mentor Initiative to address these challenges. California is committed to mentoring, not as a panacea for youth's problems but as a logical, cost effective method of assisting today's at-risk youth to become productive, contributing members of our society.

California Mentor Initiative Objectives

The desired outcome of the Initiative is to reduce the four major problem areas mentioned above by recruiting and training quality mentors over four years to reach California's at-risk youth. While there are currently an estimated 65,000 mentors providing support to California's youth through mentor programs, tens of thousands of youths are still waiting for a mentor. This information is based on survey results provided by local mentor programs to the California Mentor Resource Center.

In our effort to expand existing mentoring services throughout California the protection and safety of youth is of paramount importance.

Highlights

The California Mentor Coalition was established to encourage private sector involvement in the California Mentor Initiative. Members of the Coalition represent business, the entertainment industry, mentor programs, and public agencies. The Coalition's tasks include: developing and implementing a multi-year strategic plan to expand the field of mentoring throughout California, increasing societal awareness about the benefits of mentoring, recruiting and training quality new mentors, and expanding private sector participation and fiscal investment in mentor services.

In collaboration with members of the mentoring community the California Mentor Coalition has developed and adopted quality assurance standards for use by participating mentor programs. The California Mentor Initiative offers technical assistance to any mentor program interested in adopting and implementing these quality assurance standards within their respective programs.

Since the inception of the California Mentor Initiative in June of 1995 the State of California has invested over \$20 million in funds to support local mentoring efforts. The major funding sources include:

- The Department of Community Services and Development has awarded funds to support local mentor collaboratives and programs.

Continued

For Information Contact

*Mentor Resource Center
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Sacramento
California
95814*

*(800) 444-3066 in CA
(916) 323-6589 outside CA*

Fax (916) 323-1270

*Please refer to the CMI
Internet home page for a
listing of available Mentor
Resource Center services.
Home page address:
<http://www.cmi.cahwnet.gov>*

- The Governor's Office of Child Development and Education (OCDE) has awarded funds to local school districts and communities to mentor children and youth under the California Academic Volunteer and Mentor Service Program. Under this program, mentors will be linked with at-risk children to, among other things, improve educational outcomes.
- The California Youth Authority has allocated funds for the expansion of the "Young Men as Fathers" program into county juvenile halls, ranches and possibly alternative schools in the community.
- The Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs has allocated funds to support local mentoring efforts through California's alcohol and drug program service system.
- The Ambassador program under the California Conservation Corps (CCC) is training second year corps members to promote mentoring in local communities at seven sites throughout the State. CCC Ambassadors participate in community outreach, promote mentorship and mentorship training opportunities, and recruit and link mentors for local mentor organizations.

Mentor Resource Center and Hotline

The Mentor Resource Center (MRC) has been created to serve as a library and clearing-house for mentoring materials and provides a database for mentor referrals. The MRC is located at 1700 K Street, Sacramento, 95814, and is available to the public as a single point of contact for mentor program development and information. By calling the MRC Hotline at 1-800-444-3066, (outside of California call (916) 323-6589) the public may obtain a packet of information including a statewide directory of mentor programs, funding information, and other mentor information. Some of this information is also accessible via the Internet at <http://www.cmi.cahwnet.gov>.

Mentoring Facts

Studies are providing data reflecting the powerful impact of a caring adult in a young person's life. Research shows a 46 percent reduction in the initiation of drug use and a 27 percent reduction in the initiation of alcohol use for young people in a study of Big Brothers/Big Sisters programs. (Source: "Making A Difference: An Impact Study of Big Brothers/Big Sisters," Public Private Ventures, 1995) Additional research shows that grades in school improved for 59 percent of students as a result of help from their mentors; 53 percent credited mentors with improving their ability to avoid drugs; 52 percent of students improved their ability to stay out of trouble as a result of their mentoring experience. (Source: "Mentoring: Lessons Learned," The Commonwealth Fund, Louis Harris and Associates, Inc., 1994)

Virtual Mentoring Community

Through the combined efforts of several California technology companies a web site, relational database and communication system have been designed to link mentor programs together. The development of these systems will enable mentor programs to track mentor-mentee matches and collect valuable client impact data.